

INTEGRATION OF ULTRA LOW K DIELECTRIC IN A SEMICONDUCTOR
FABRICATION PROCESS

Field of the Invention

5 The present invention is in the field of semiconductor devices and more particularly in the field of semiconductor fabrication processes employing low K dielectrics.

Related Art

10 In the field of semiconductor fabrication, the use of dielectric materials having a low dielectric constant (low K materials) is well known. Low K dielectrics are used primarily in backend processing. Backend processing refers generally to processing subsequent to the formation of transistors in the wafer substrate to connect the transistors (typically with multiple levels of interconnects). Each interconnect level is separated by an interlevel dielectric (ILD). The individual interconnects within a single interconnect level are also
15 separated by a dielectric material that may or may not be the same as the ILD. Vias or contacts are formed in the ILD's and filled with conductive material to connect the interconnect levels in a desired pattern to achieve a desired functionality.

20 The spacing between adjacent interconnects within an interconnect level and the spacing between vertically adjacent levels have both decreased as device complexity and performance have increased. Minimizing cross coupling between the many signals within a device is now a significant design consideration. The primary source of signal cross coupling or cross talk is capacitive. A pair of adjacent interconnect (whether within a single interconnect level or in vertically adjacent interconnect levels) separated by an intermediate dielectric material form an unintended parallel plate capacitor. Minimizing cross coupling
25 requires a minimization of the capacitance between any pair of adjacent interconnects, especially those interconnects that carry signals that switch a high frequency.

30 One popular approach to minimizing cross talk includes the use of low K dielectric materials as the ILD. Low K materials reduce cross talk because the capacitance of a parallel plate capacitor is directly proportional to the dielectric constant of the material between the capacitor plates. A lower dielectric constant material translates into lower capacitance and lower cross coupling.

Various low K materials have been used in low K backend processing with mixed results. Integration of low K material into existing fabrication processes is particularly challenging in the case of backend processing that includes the use of chemical mechanical polishing (CMP). CMP is a technique by which each interconnect level is formed in many existing
5 processes. In a CMP process, as implied by its name, a film or layer is physically polished with a rotating polishing pad in the presence of a "slurry" that contains mechanical abrasion components and/or chemical components to produce a smooth upper surface and to remove excess conductive material and thereby isolate the individual interconnects from one another.

Low K materials are generally not easily integrated into a CMP-based backend
10 process. Low K materials tend to exhibit dishing and erosion and other forms of deterioration under chemical mechanical polishing and are susceptible to slurry penetration into the Low K material. To combat this problem, capping materials have been formed over the low K dielectrics to act as a CMP stop. Unfortunately, adhesion between many materials used as low K materials and other materials suitable for use as a CMP stopping layer is often
15 not good. It would be desirable, therefore, to implement a process integrating low K ILD's into a CMP backend process flow.

Brief Description of the Drawings

20 The present invention is illustrated by way of example and not limited by the accompanying figures, in which like references indicate similar elements, and in which:

FIGs 1-4 are partial cross sectional views of selected stages of a prior art semiconductor fabrication process;

25 FIGs 5-10 are partial cross-sectional views of selected stages of a semiconductor fabrication process according to one embodiment of the present invention.

FIG 11 is a conceptual illustration of a deposition process suitable for use in one embodiment of the present invention.

30 Skilled artisans appreciate that elements in the figures are illustrated for simplicity and clarity and have not necessarily been drawn to scale. For example, the dimensions of

some of the elements in the figures may be exaggerated relative to other elements to help improve the understanding of the embodiments of the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Drawings

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Generally speaking, the present invention contemplates a semiconductor fabrication process in which low K dielectric materials are used in the backend fabrication of a semiconductor device by including a deposition technique in which a capping layer suitable for use as a CMP stopping layer is adhered to the underlying, low K material using an
10 intervening "glue" layer. Adhesion between the glue layer and the capping layer is achieved in one implementation by depositing both layers by CVD techniques using a continuous plasma (i.e., no break in plasma between the first layer and the second layer). The resulting structure includes a top film suitable for use as a CMP stop layer that adheres to an underlying ultra low K dielectric thereby achieving the desired reduction in capacitive
15 coupling without sacrificing the reliability of the ILD structure.

Turning now to the drawings, FIGs 1-4 present a conventional process flow for a CMP backend process. In the depicted process, an ILD **104** is formed over a semiconductor substrate **102** of a semiconductor wafer (FIG 1). Substrate **102** will typically include another ILD layer having metal level or via level conductive lines. ILD **104** is typically formed by
20 depositing a dielectric over substrate **102**, patterning photoresist over the ILD, etching ILD **104** to form voids **106** where a subsequent interconnect or via (contact) will be located. FIG 2 is a top view of wafer **100** showing a pair of voids **106** extending parallel to each other across portions the wafer surface as is typical of interconnects and is characteristic of interconnects that may experience or exhibit capacitive cross coupling.

25 In FIG 3, a conductive material **108** such as copper or aluminum is deposited over the wafer surface to fill voids **106**. The deposition process leaves conductive material outside of the channels defined by voids **106** such that each of the voids is electrically connected by the conductive material following deposition. To isolate individual interconnects from one another, a CMP process is employed to remove the portions of material **108** exterior to the
30 voids **106** and thereby form interconnects **110**. As will be appreciated, the CMP process proceeds until the upper surface of ILD **104** is encountered. To ensure the isolation of the

various interconnects, the CMP process typically polishes into (i.e., removes) an upper portion of ILD **104**. The ILD **104** must, therefore, be capable of being polished without breaking down structurally.

5 An unintended parallel plate capacitor **111** is formed during the formation of the interconnect. Capacitor **111** is referred to as an intralevel capacitor that includes adjacent interconnects as its "plates" and the intermediate ILD as the capacitor dielectric. Capacitor **111** limits the speed at which signals on adjacent interconnects **110** can switch with respect to each other and can induce signal changes in the interconnects. The capacitance of capacitor **111** is roughly proportional to the dielectric constant of ILD **104** and inversely
10 proportional to the displacement between adjacent interconnects. As the displacement decreases in advanced semiconductors, the capacitor value the resulting limitations on device performance increase. In addition to intralevel capacitors such as capacitor **111**, interlevel capacitors are formed between ILD **104** and one or underlying interconnect levels in the substrate **102**. These interlevel capacitors also contribute to performance degradation
15 although, typically, to a lesser extent than the intralevel capacitors.

The present invention addresses capacitive coupling in advanced semiconductor devices by using an ultra low K (ULK) dielectric as the primary backend dielectric and integrating the ULK into a backend process flow that includes one or more polishing steps by capping the ULK with a capping layer capable of withstanding the mechanical rigors of a
20 conventional CMP process.

Returning to the drawings, FIGs 5-10 depict selected steps in a fabrication process sequence for forming a CMP-compatible, ULK dielectric film according to one embodiment of the present invention. The dielectric film is equally suitable for use as an interlevel dielectric that isolates the interconnects in vertically adjacent interconnect levels and as an
25 intra-level dielectric that isolates the interconnects within a single interconnect level. In either case, the film may be referred to herein as an ILD for the sake of brevity.

In FIG 5, a first dielectric layer **204** is formed overlying a substrate **202** of a semiconductor wafer **200**. Substrate **202** includes all structures formed during "front end" processing and all previously formed interconnect levels and their corresponding dielectric
30 films. Thus, substrate **202** of FIG 5 likely includes (although not depicted) a bulk silicon portion, doped silicon regions and other structures (such as transistor gate structures)

defining transistors, and all previously formed interconnect levels. Thus, the upper surface of substrate **202** may include electrically conductive portions such as a via or interconnect and electrically insulating portions such as the last ILD formed.

First dielectric layer **204** is, in an embodiment designed to minimize capacitive coupling, a low K material and, even more desirably, an ultra low K (ULK) dielectric. For purposes of this disclosure, a ULK dielectric is a dielectric having a dielectric constant of 3.0 or less. ULK materials include spin on dielectrics such as the silsesquioxane-based LKD-5109 dielectric material from JSR Corporation and CVD films including OctaMethylCycloTetra Siloxane (OMCTS)-based materials such as the "Black Diamond II" films from Applied Materials. In an embodiment, suitable for use with a 130 or 90 nm fabrication process, first dielectric **204** has a thickness in the range of approximately 2000 to 5000 Angstroms.

While the low K value of first dielectric layer **204** is desirable for reducing parasitic capacitance, the likely candidates for use as first dielectric **204** are not sufficiently mechanically stable to provide an etch stop for a subsequent CMP process. Accordingly, it is necessary to deposit at least one capping layer over first dielectric layer **204** to achieve a reliable ILD structure. Referring now to FIG 6 and FIG 7, a second dielectric **206** is formed overlying first dielectric **204** and a third dielectric layer **208** is formed over second dielectric layer **206** to form an ILD **209** including first, second, and third dielectrics **204**, **206**, and **208**. From a functional perspective, third dielectric layer **208** serves as the capping layer having the needed ability to provide a CMP stop layer. Because the most likely candidates for first and third dielectrics **204** and **208** do not adhere well to each other, second dielectric **206** is provided to provide an adhering "glue" layer between the CMP stop layer (**208**) and the ULK layer (**204**).

In one embodiment, second dielectric layer **206** is an organic silicon-oxide film. Second dielectric **206**, according to one embodiment, is formed by reacting an oxygen bearing species and a second species that includes silicon, hydrogen, and carbon in a plasma enhanced chemical vapor deposition chamber reactor. The second species may be derived from a precursor such as tetramethylsilane (4MS) or trimethylsilane (3MS). When reacted in a CVD chamber with oxygen under appropriate deposition conditions, the 4MS/3MS precursor deposits as a SiCOH film **206** overlying ULK film **204**. For use in 130 and 90 nm

technologies, second dielectric layer **206** has a thickness in the range of approximately 200 to 800 angstroms. In this embodiment, the SiCOH second dielectric film **206** adheres well to ULK first dielectric film **204**, but is not suitable for use as a CMP stop layer. A capping layer is needed that can adhere to second dielectric layer **206** and is capable of providing a
5 suitable stopping layer for a CMP of copper (or other conductive material).

As shown in FIG 7, third dielectric layer **208** is deposited over second dielectric **206**. In one embodiment suitable for use with a SiCOH second dielectric layer **206**, third dielectric layer is a silicon oxide film formed in a CVD reactor chamber using the same first and second species as the CVD process used to form SiCOH second dielectric **206**. In one such
10 implementation, third dielectric layer **208** is formed by reacting an oxygen bearing species and a silicon, hydrogen, and carbon bearing species in a plasma enhanced CVD reactor chamber. Third dielectric layer **208** has, in one embodiment, a thickness in the range of approximately 500 to 2000 angstroms.

In one embodiment theorized to improve the adhesion and reliability of ILD **209**, the
15 formation of second and third dielectric layers **206** and **208** is achieved with a deposition process in which the flow rates of the precursors are manipulated while maintaining a plasma (glow discharge) within the chamber. This particular embodiment is conceptually illustrated in FIG 11, which graphs the flow rates (in sccm's) of a first precursor **224** and a second precursor **226** as a function of time during a plasma deposition process **220** suitable for
20 forming second and third dielectric layers **206** and **208**.

In the depicted process, first precursor **224** is an oxygen bearing precursor such as O₂ and second precursor **226** includes silicon, hydrogen, and carbon. Exemplary second precursors include 4MS and 3MS. During a first duration (**221**) of the process, extending from t₀ to t₁, the flow rate of second precursor exceeds the flow rate of first precursor (**222**).
25 At the termination of the first duration (**221**), a second duration (**222**) commences during which the flow rate of first precursor **224** exceeds the flow rate of second precursor **226**. In the preferred embodiment, a continuous plasma discharge is maintained during first and second durations **221** and **222** by maintaining uninterrupted radio frequency power during first and second durations **221** and **222**. Following the second duration **222**, the flow of first
30 and second precursors **224** and **226** is terminated. In one embodiment, the chamber temperature and rf power are constant throughout first duration **221** and second duration **222**.

In one exemplary process recipe, the flow rate of O₂ first precursor **224** is 220 sccm's during first duration **221** and 940 sccm's during second duration **222**, the flow rate of TMS second precursor **226** is 1040 sccm's during first duration **221** and 480 sccm's during second duration **222**. The chamber is maintained at a constant temperature, in the range of approximately 300
5 to 400 °C, and a constant pressure and rf power.

During first duration **221**, when the organic second precursor **226** is plentiful, organic second dielectric layer **206** is formed. When the organic precursor flow rate is reduced during second duration **222**, third dielectric **208** is formed as an oxide that is substantially free of carbon, although it is derived from an organic precursor. It is theorized that, by
10 maintaining a continuous vacuum and glow discharge during the formation of second and third dielectric layers **206** and **208** results in an interface that is reliable and exhibits sufficient adhesion. The resulting three-layer ILD **203** (comprising layers **204**, **206**, and **208**) provides an adequate stopping layer for a subsequent CMP processes while achieving a structure with an overall lower dielectric constant that exhibits adequate reliability and
15 adhesion.

Referring now to FIGs 8 through 10, an interconnect level is formed after formation of ILD **203**. In FIG 8, a void **210** is etched into ILD **203** using conventional photolithographic, photoresist, and etch processing. A conductive material **211**, exemplified by copper, is deposited in a conventional manner to fill void **210**. The portions of conductive
20 material **211** that are exterior to void **210** are then removed with a CMP process that terminates on third dielectric layer **208**. Depending upon the implementation the CMP process leaves all, some, or substantially none of layer **208** after completion.

In the foregoing specification, the invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments. However, one of ordinary skill in the art appreciates that various
25 modifications and changes can be made without departing from the scope of the present invention as set forth in the claims below. For example, the semiconductor substrate of FIG 1 may be implemented with conventional silicon bulk wafers, silicon-on-insulator (SOI) wafers, as well as non-silicon alternatives such as germanium and various III-V compounds. The conductive material could comprise a metal interconnect level, a via interconnect, or a
30 combination of both. The first, second, and third dielectric layers **204**, **206**, and **208**, may be different materials than those disclosed herein. Similarly, the precursors used may be

different than the precursors disclosed and the precise deposition parameters may vary with implementation including wafer size and deposition tool. Accordingly, the specification and figures are to be regarded in an illustrative rather than a restrictive sense, and all such modifications are intended to be included within the scope of present invention.

5 Benefits, other advantages, and solutions to problems have been described above with regard to specific embodiments. However, the benefits, advantages, solutions to problems, and any element(s) that may cause any benefit, advantage, or solution to occur or become more pronounced are not to be construed as a critical, required, or essential feature or element of any or all the claims. As used herein, the terms "comprises," "comprising," or any
10 other variation thereof, are intended to cover a non-exclusive inclusion, such that a process, method, article, or apparatus that comprises a list of elements does not include only those elements but may include other elements not expressly listed or inherent to such process, method, article, or apparatus.

CLAIMS

1. A semiconductor fabrication process, comprising:

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forming an interlevel dielectric (ILD) overlying a substrate of a semiconductor wafer wherein forming the ILD comprises:

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forming a low K dielectric overlying a semiconductor substrate of the wafer, wherein a dielectric constant of the low K dielectric is less than or equal to 3.0;

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forming an organic, silicon-oxide, glue layer dielectric overlying the low K dielectric; and

forming a CMP stop layer dielectric overlying the glue layer dielectric;

forming a void in the ILD;

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depositing a conductive material over the wafer to fill the void; and

removing portions of the conductive material exterior to the void by polishing the wafer with a CMP process and terminating the CMP process on the CMP stop layer dielectric.

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2. The method of claim 1, wherein forming the glue layer dielectric and the CMP stop layer dielectric comprises:

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forming a plasma within a CVD reactor chamber using a specified set of precursors including a carbon bearing precursor and maintaining the plasma during formation of the glue layer dielectric; and

following formation of the glue layer dielectric, reducing a flow rate of the carbon bearing precursor while continuing to maintain the plasma to form the CMP stop layer dielectric wherein the CMP stop layer dielectric is substantially free of carbon.

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3. The method of claim 2, wherein the specified set of precursors includes an oxygen bearing precursor and a second precursor selected from tetramethylsilane (4MS) and trimethylsilane (3MS).

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4. The method of claim 3, wherein a ratio of the oxygen precursor flow rate to the second precursor flow rate is less than 1:2 while forming the glue layer dielectric and further wherein the ratio exceeds 2:1 while forming the CMP stop layer dielectric.

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5. The method of claim 4, wherein the reactor chamber temperature and pressure are maintained at constant during the formation of the glue layer dielectric and the CMP stop layer dielectric.

6. The method of claim 2, wherein forming the low K dielectric comprises spinning on a low K material.

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7. The method of claim 2, wherein forming the low K dielectric comprises depositing an OctaMethylCycloTetra Siloxane (OMCTS) material.

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8. A method of forming an interlevel dielectric layer (ILD) overlying a substrate of a semiconductor wafer, comprising:

forming a first dielectric having a dielectric constant less than or equal to 3.0 overlying the substrate;

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depositing, with a chemical vapor deposition process, second and third dielectrics overlying the first dielectric, wherein forming the second and third dielectrics

comprises forming a plasma from an oxygen bearing precursor and an organic precursor, maintaining the flow rates of the precursors at first flow rates while forming the second dielectric, and thereafter, reducing the relative flow rate of the organic precursor while maintaining the plasma to form the third dielectric.

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9. The method of claim 8, wherein forming the first dielectric comprises spinning on a silsesquioxane-based film.

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10. The method of claim 8, wherein forming the first dielectric comprises depositing an OctaMethylCycloTetra Siloxane (OMCTS)-based film.

11. The method of claim 8, wherein the second dielectric comprises an organic silicon-oxide, and further wherein the third dielectric comprises substantially carbon-free silicon-oxide.

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12. The method of claim 8, wherein the organic precursor comprises an precursor selected from 3MS and 4MS.

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13. The method of claim 12, wherein a ratio of the oxygen precursor flow rate to the organic precursor flow rate is less than 1:2 while forming the second dielectric and further wherein the ratio exceeds 2:1 while forming the third dielectric.

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14. The method of claim 13, wherein a temperature and pressure of a reactor chamber of the CVD process remain constant during formation of the second and third dielectrics and further wherein an radio frequency power of the reactor chamber is uninterrupted during formation of the second and third dielectrics.

15. A semiconductor fabrication process, comprising:

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forming a first dielectric having a dielectric constant of less than or equal to 3.0 over a semiconductor substrate;

forming, in a chemical vapor deposition (CVD) reactor chamber using a continuously maintained plasma derived from an oxygen precursor and an organic precursor, a second dielectric overlying the first dielectric and a third dielectric overlying the second dielectric, wherein the second dielectric comprises an organic silicon-oxide and the third dielectric
5 comprises a substantially carbon free silicon-oxide.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein forming the first dielectric comprises spin depositing a silsesquioxane-based material overlying the substrate.

10 17. The method of claim 15, wherein forming the first dielectric comprises depositing an OctaMethylCycloTetra Siloxane (OMCTS)-based film overlying the substrate.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the organic precursor comprises 3MS or 4MS.

15 19. The method of claim 18, wherein the flow rate of the organic precursor exceeds the flow rate of the oxygen precursor while forming the second dielectric and the organic precursor flow rate is less than the oxygen precursor flow rate during while forming the third dielectric.

20 20. The method of claim 19, wherein the CVD reactor temperature and pressure are maintained at constant values during formation of the second and third dielectrics.

Integration of Ultra Low K Dielectric in a Semiconductor Fabrication Process

Abstract of the Disclosure

5 A backend semiconductor fabrication process includes forming an interlevel dielectric (ILD) overlying a wafer substrate by forming a low K dielectric ($K < 3.0$) overlying the substrate of the wafer, forming an organic silicon-oxide glue layer overlying the low K dielectric, and forming a CMP stop layer dielectric overlying the glue layer dielectric. A void is then formed in the ILD, a conductive material is deposited to fill the void, and a
10 polish process removes the excess conductive material. Forming the glue layer dielectric and the CMP stop layer dielectric is achieved by forming a CVD plasma using an organic precursor and an oxygen precursor and maintaining the plasma through the formation of the glue layer dielectric and the stop layer. The flow rate of the organic precursor is reduced relative to the oxygen precursor flow rate to form a CMP stop layer that is substantially free
15 of carbon.